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RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI 2345
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC
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RHHMUNA/HQ USPACOM HONOLULU HI
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SINGAPORE 000532

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [MOPS](#) [ASEC](#) [PTER](#) [MARR](#) [AF](#) [SN](#)
SUBJECT: SINGAPORE SLOWLY WADING DEEPER INTO AFGHANISTAN
FIGHT

Classified By: E/P COUNSELOR IKE REED FOR REASONS 1.4 (B AND D)

¶1. (C) Singapore announced in the Straits Times newspaper June 4 that it will deploy to Afghanistan a battlefield radar system and supporting personnel that can detect enemy artillery, rocket and mortar launches and help direct counter-battery fire. The radar requires a four-man team to operate and Defense Attach Office (DAO) contacts at the Ministry of Defense (MINDEF) have confirmed that 15 personnel will be deployed along with the radar.

¶2. (C) According to MINDEF contacts, the radar system will be set up in support of Australian troops based in Camp Holland in the Afghan province of Oruzgan. Singapore is already familiar with the conditions on the ground in Oruzgan; it deploys a medical team in support of a Dutch PRT there. A 39-member medical team deployment (the second of three planned) recently returned to Singapore from Oruzgan following a three-month stint. Defense Minister Teo Chee Hean was quoted saying that the deployment of the radar system and the troops to man it could last as long as 9-12 months. MINDEF contacts told DAO that they expect to deploy the unit and supporting personnel on an August-September time-frame.

¶3. (C) Comment: Concerned by potential negative public reaction, the GOS has kept its previous Afghanistan contributions modest, low key, and largely out of harms way and its public statements have emphasized their humanitarian role. This deployment will break new ground by placing Singapore Armed Forces (SAF) personnel in an explicitly combat role. The front-page article in the government-influenced Straits Times led off by saying the SAF "is getting into the fight" in Afghanistan. The latest in a series of prominent articles in recent months which have highlighted in favorable terms SAF deployments to Afghanistan and the Gulf of Aden, it appears to represent an attempt to sensitize the public to the GOS's decision to increasingly allow SAF forces to engage in a combat role. While this is a positive development in terms of our ability to encourage Singapore to do more, it does not necessarily suggest the GOS is willing to significantly expand its contributions. Our DAO believes this deployment may represent a desire by Singapore to "try out" one of its weapon systems in an actual combat environment, while still keeping risks to its personnel relatively low. End Comment.

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